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Niagara's Frontier

*Without a Soldier
and without a Gun*

SIR ANGUS FLETCHER, K.C.M.G., C.B.E.





“Were American Newcomen to do naught else, our work is well done if we succeed in sharing with America a strengthened inspiration to continue the struggle towards a nobler Civilization—through wider knowledge and understanding of the hopes, ambitions, and deeds of leaders in the past who have upheld Civilization’s material progress. As we look backward, let us look forward.”

—CHARLES PENROSE
*Senior Vice-President for North America
The Newcomen Society of England*



This statement, crystallizing a broad purpose of the Society, was first read at the Newcomen Meeting at New York World’s Fair on August 5, 1939, when American Newcomen were guests of The British Government

“Actorum Memores simul affectamus Agenda”

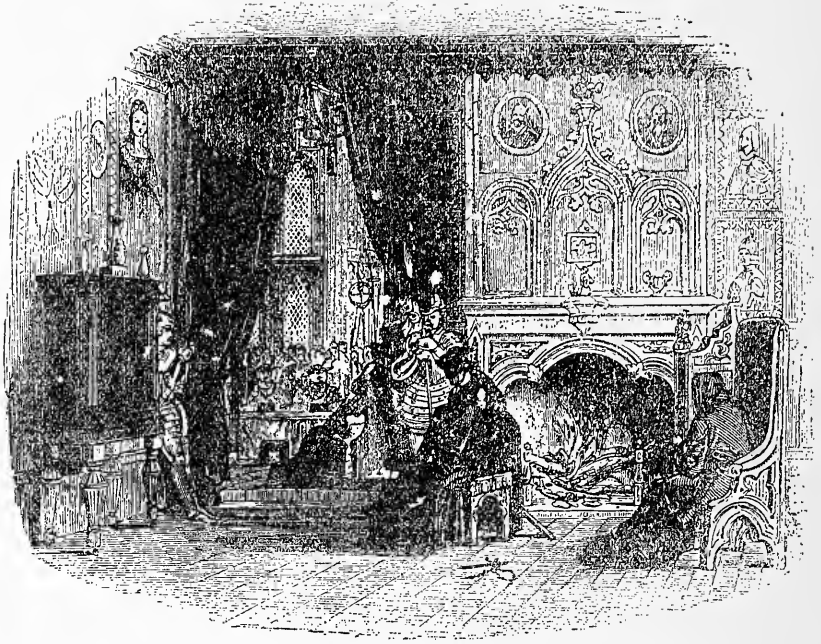
NIAGARA'S FRONTIER—*Without a Soldier
and without a Gun*



“The Niagara River seems inevitably a frontier—it is a frontier without a soldier and without a gun.”

—SIR ANGUS FLETCHER





“In the Winter of 1678, the daring La Salle began a stockade on the site of Fort Niagara, destined to become a fortress for which three nations were to struggle, and where today *three flags fly*.

“It has been our custom to think of history in terms of military or dynastic milestones. Newcomen, however, is interested in *the milestones of economic development*. La Salle’s fort was essential to business.”

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MEMBER OF THE NEWCOMEN SOCIETY

HIS BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S CONSUL

AT BUFFALO, NEW YORK



THE NEWCOMEN SOCIETY OF ENGLAND

AMERICAN BRANCH NEW YORK

1948

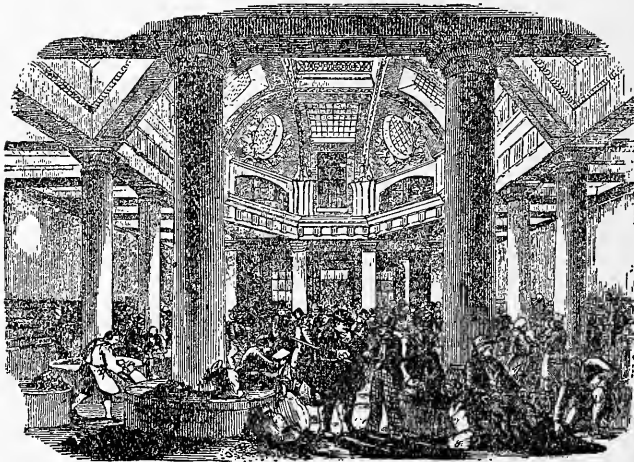
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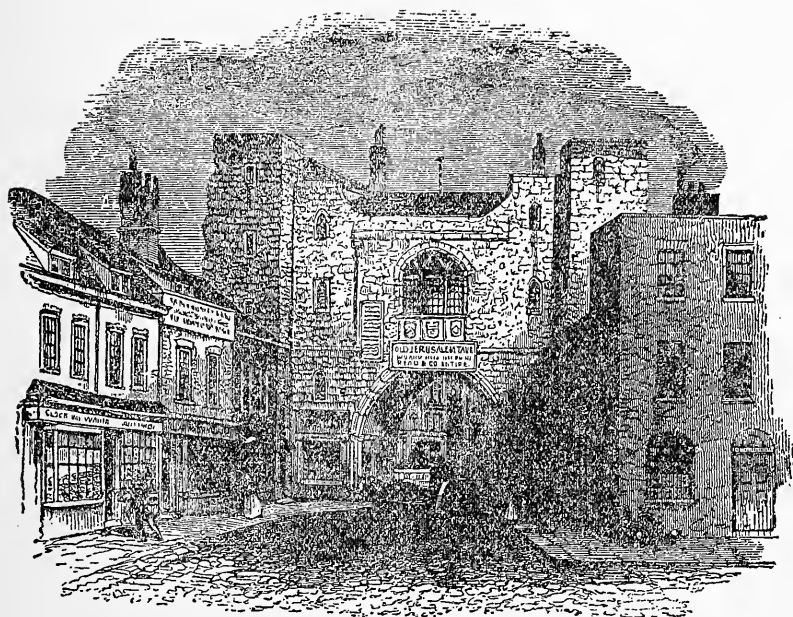
*This Newcomen Address, dealing with one of
the most interesting, most historic, most beautiful
frontiers in the world, was delivered at a
National Newcomen Dinner of The New-
comen Society of England, at which Sir Angus
was guest of honor, held in Ballroom of The
Pierre, at New York, N.Y., U.S.A.,
on January 8, 1948*



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“With an ocean of forest and swamp on either side, and only Fort Niagara at the Eastern end to guard them, the early and enterprising French traders pushed on and maintained a constant flow of missionaries, traders, soldiers, explorers—and *more* traders—the advance guard of what might have become a splendid French overseas Empire.”

—SIR ANGUS FLETCHER

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Biographical Sketch of The Author



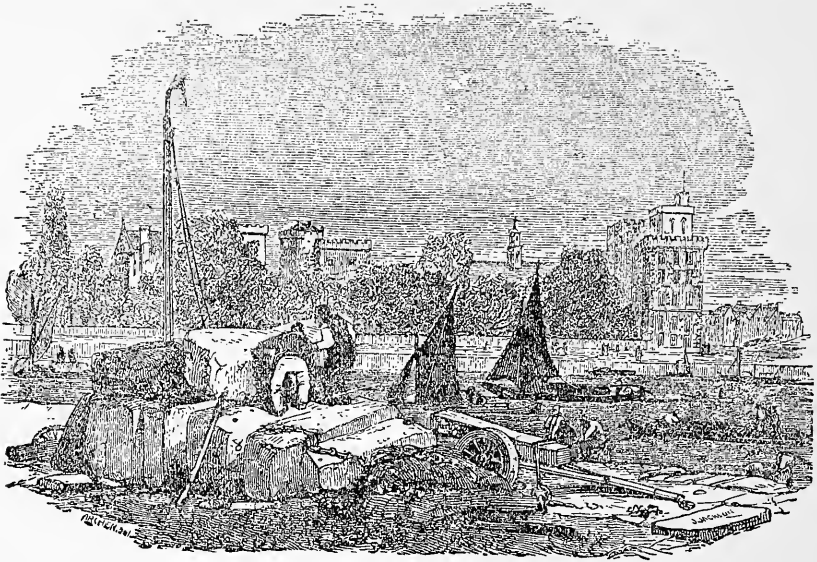
Of the NIAGARA FRONTIER—unique in human interest, in historical background, and in beauty of setting—does a distinguished Englishman of proved scholarship write in the present Newcomen Address. It has been said that one of the characteristics of that curious medley of Kingdoms, Commonwealths, Dominions, Unions, Colonies, and Protectorates we call the British Empire, is that it offers unlimited opportunity to its people to make their life's work in any quarter of the globe. A man may be born in Peebles and run a bank in Hong Kong, or he may arrive in the House of Lords by way of New Brunswick. The Scottish people have been ahead of most others in taking advantage of this privilege. SIR ANGUS FLETCHER, K.C.M.G., C.B.E., is perhaps a good example! Son of an engineer from the Western Isles of Scotland, SIR ANGUS was born in Queenstown, South Africa. Educated at South African College, General Smuts' alma mater, he entered the legal profession in what was then the small colony of Southern Rhodesia. The First World War took him into the South African Army, first in operations against General de Wet, whose abortive rebellion was speedily crushed, and then against German South West Africa, where he served under General Louis Botha, then Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of South Africa. The campaign ended in 1915, when he was commissioned to the Royal Artillery, serving in G Battery, the lineal descendant of Mercer's Troop that fought at Waterloo. While convalescing from wounds received in the Battle of the Somme, he was attached to the British

Biographical Sketch of The Author



Mission in the United States of America, and it was through friendships made then that he returned later to America. Becoming interested in industrial relations, he joined the research staff of National Industrial Conference Board, at New York. Always interested in Anglo-American relations, he accepted an invitation from the British Foreign Office to assist in establishing at New York a centre of official information on Great Britain and the Empire. In 1928, he was one of two members of the British Foreign Service sent to study cultural relations between Great Britain and countries of South and Central America. During the Second World War, Sir Angus was asked to return to the Service and reopen the British Consulate on the Niagara Frontier at Buffalo; and since then admits he has fallen a willing victim to the fascination of that region, of which he writes herein. In 1946, he was British delegate to the Headquarters Commission of the United Nations of which body he was elected Chairman. Widely known and beloved in American Newcomen, SIR ANGUS is a member of the Niagara Committee, in The Newcomen Society of England.





My fellow members of Newcomen:

THE NIAGARA RIVER seems inevitably a frontier. It is part of the great water system running more than half way across the North American Continent. The River itself flows due North, almost at right angles to the general line of the great inland seas which it connects. It is only thirty-seven miles long. It is deep, swift flowing, and spectacular. The Niagara Falls are one of the wonders of nature. The area along this short but mighty river is still called the Niagara Frontier, though at least one aspect of most frontiers—the soldier with the gun—is conspicuous by its absence.



History of this region begins with the account left by the Jesuit mission, just 300 years ago.

Of the earlier history of the Indian tribes we know almost nothing with certainty. We do know that despite their internecine struggles the Indian tribes presented a formidable barrier to the movement of the white man along the Mohawk Valley, and it was only after they had been forced to submission by the American

colonists that the movement Westward could proceed with any measure of freedom. However, I do not propose to touch on the Indian aspect of the Niagara Frontier.



The first man to follow the missionaries was La Salle, a Frenchman,—intrepid, enterprising, and intelligent. When he arrived in 1678 at the upper end of Lake Ontario, he landed first on what is now the American side of the Niagara River. He had come over from France on this dangerous expedition not as a political adventurer, but as *a trader*—or, as we should say, as a business man—and, with a business man's instinct, he saw quickly what an admirable site the point on which now stands Fort Niagara would make for a trading post and a fort—there being no possibility of trading without protection. Business required security in 1678, as it does in the 20th Century.



La Salle already had established his first trading post at Frontenac, but Indian stories of the vast size and splendour of the great lakes beyond, lured him on! In the Winter of 1678, he began a stockade on the site of Fort Niagara, destined to become a fortress for which three nations were to struggle, and where today *three flags* fly. The stockade in due time became a stone fort which was completed in 1758, only to be surrendered to the British a year later.

It has been our custom to think of history in terms of military or dynastic milestones. Newcomen, however, is interested in *the milestones of economic development*. La Salle's fort was essential to business. Business did, in fact, develop around it. A great market for the fur trade grew up and along with business came the arts of civilization, flowing through a constant stream of traders and explorers. It became a reservoir of the French spirit. The fort was like that ancient Norman Tower which

*O'er London town and its golden hoard
Still keeps its silent watch and ward.*

Fort Niagara was a base for operations West. From it new avenues of exploration and economic development were opened, the main line running up the river to the foot of the rapids near Lewiston, thence by portage up the escarpment around the Falls, and so up to Lake Erie. This led to Detroit and on. Another line of traffic led to the headwaters of the Ohio, a third through Lake Michigan to the great Mississippi Valley. And so a pattern was set which in a very short time was to fix the principal channels of economic life in the Northerly half of the United States of America.

All passed along the narrow strip of country which we call the Niagara Frontier. With an ocean of forest and swamp on either side, and only Fort Niagara at the Eastern end to guard them, these enterprising French traders pushed on and maintained a constant flow of missionaries, traders, soldiers, explorers—and *more* traders—the advance guard of what might have become a splendid French overseas Empire.



But Providence decreed otherwise. Wolfe at Quebec and Sir William Johnson at Niagara ended the splendid prospect of French Empire on the North American continent. From 1759, the destiny of America North of the Rio Grande was to be *in the tradition of the English language, the English Common Law, and an English way of life*. Above all, it was to be in a political tradition of government representative of and responsible to the people, though not, indeed, without struggle and bloodshed.



Fort Niagara was held all through the Revolution and had been retained by Great Britain pending fulfillment by the newly-created United States of the Treaty of 1783, under which independence was recognized. It was given up to the United States in 1796, the date having been fixed under the Treaty negotiated by John Jay.



This question of handing over the Frontier forts had been one of the very first causes of friction between the two countries, after the Revolution. Adams, first American Minister to the Court of

St. James, had been instructed to press for it, but King George's Government would not relinquish the Frontier forts nor pay any indemnity for slaves, until the long outstanding debts due to British merchants were paid. It is not now denied that impediments in one form or another were placed in the way of the collection of the debts due to British business men, and that the treatment of the Loyalists after the Peace was in utter disregard of the spirit of the Treaty. Jay himself declared that there "had not been a single day since the ratification of the Treaty on which it had not been violated by one or other of the States."



Great Britain gave up the Forts, but reconciliation was not easy. Those early years along the Niagara Frontier were years of suspicion and uncertainty between the British and their former fellow citizens. How could it be otherwise? Strategically, such forts are of no significance today. But in those days it was different. The Provincial Capital of Upper Canada was moved, because it was not thought safe at that time to be within gunshot of an American fort. York was one hundred miles farther off by land, on the other shore of Lake Ontario. To us, alas, safety is not to be secured by moving one hundred miles farther off. The secret of Canada's security from American guns was still unknown; the Rush-Bagot Treaty was still in the future; all that could be seen from Canada was an ebullient, not to say aggressive, people across the border, flushed with military success and large acquisitions of other people's property.



Canadian misgivings were not without foundation. War came in 1812, and Canadian soil and Canadian waters provided the principal battle ground. The War of 1812, in the nature of the case, was of particular significance to the Niagara Frontier, as a glance at the map of those days will show.



The United States was not yet twenty-five years old when it declared war on Great Britain for reasons ostensibly connected

with trade and the so-called freedom of the seas; actually the war proved quickly to be an attempt to conquer Canada and so to drive Britain out of the North American continent. In retrospect, the military operations look rather like a series of adventures in official arson, fluctuating across the border; and in miniature naval battles upon the Great Lakes. The main fact was that the British and Canadian forces successfully resisted invasion, while British defeats on the Lakes and the damage sustained from privateers amounted on balance to much less than the economic damage inflicted upon the United States. One curious but significant feature of this unsatisfactory and unsatisfying war was that throughout hostilities diplomatic contact *was maintained* between the two countries. Remembering how drastically we severed contact with our recent enemies, does not this anomaly suggest that *even then* war between the British and American peoples was not quite the real thing?



Once the Canadian invasion had failed, there were good reasons why peace should be made and the whole episode relegated to an even less important pigeonhole than it now occupies. But in the United States there was in 1813 a powerful political group who hated and feared Great Britain, with a result that party politics in the United States as well as the whole economic future of the country seemed to them to be involved in the outcome. On the other hand, the War was popular in Britain, to whom the friends of Napoleon seemed to be the enemies of democracy. But, as to the merits of the dispute, the British, true to type, were not so much concerned with rules and regulations as with practical considerations. As Castlereagh said "the whole question with America is one not of principle but of practice" and the practical matter, at least when the war began, was the inability of the United States to enforce an agreement, or a law, on the component States; just as it had proved unable or unwilling to carry out the terms of Peace after the Revolution with regard to commercial debts and a square deal to the Loyalists.

And so peace was unnecessarily delayed. Not until 1815, was the war ended by the Treaty of Ghent. Ostensibly, the *casus belli*

was the British right of search on American ships; actually, as has already been noted, the conquest of Canada was in view. Perhaps it was not surprising that the Treaty was eloquently silent on the nominal causes of the war and very specific in providing machinery for settlement of present and future disputes.

The local operations in the War of 1812 are of special concern in their effect upon frontier relations. Such episodes as the burning of Toronto and of Newark, now Niagara-on-the-Lake, the burning of Buffalo and Washington by way of retaliation, and the fights that took place chiefly along the Canadian side of the River, surely these would create memories not calculated to promote a peace-loving frontier? One would expect to find the memory of those conflicts very green along the River. Even after the War of 1812, the Anglo-American scene was not exactly one of pastoral serenity. Canada suffered more than one unofficial aggression from the American side, not very different from those we read about in Europe today.



If I have stressed the earlier darkness of British-Canadian relations with America, it is because I wish to emphasize the light of goodwill which has followed, and wish to illuminate the fact that to attain understanding we have had to overcome here on this Continent the same kinds of international danger that are the source of trouble elsewhere in the world at this instant moment. The normal dividends of war are hatred, jealousy, revenge, remorse, wounded pride, economic desolation. Even successful conquest and oppression cannot altogether suppress these legacies. But we find none of these on the Niagara Frontier. On the contrary, we find no military and nationalistic rivalry; but instead a positive, unaffected, and completely unobstructed *goodwill*. We have won, as it were, a local victory over war. Here then we have the foundation for a fine tradition. I claim the successful defence of Canada as part of the joint heritage of the Niagara Frontier. It was a vindication of the right to retain one's own way of life and government, and that, if I understand correctly, is one of the dearest-held traditions of the American People. And I claim as part of that common heritage the tradition of goodwill which has arisen slowly from the

ashes of 1812, under the influence of which calm discussion has supplanted the use of arms and filibustering expeditions.



Leaving the political scene, what of *the economic picture*? The Niagara Frontier was committed by nature to the role of a narrow link in one of the greatest international highways of the world. With the settlement of Anglo-American differences and the final departure of the British in 1796, we of today might expect to see the brilliant and rapid development characteristic of a modern American city, such as made America in the last century famous in every language. But it was not so. The age of Steam had not yet come, much less the age of the electron. Only those who have known the pace of the ox, the pace of the portage, can fully appreciate the long months and years that were required for the smallest progress. And progress was not fast along that narrow strip of the Niagara River and around the Falls, with wildernesses of forests on every side. The hardships of the first fifty years, seen in retrospect, seem intolerable. One is tempted to ask if we, softened and pampered as we are, could have held on through bitter winters and humid summers under the conditions of life between Lake Ontario and Lake Erie, *of those days*?



The economic life of the Niagara Frontier rested on waterways—on the great corridors to the West provided by the St. Lawrence and Great Lakes systems. The points of transshipment were necessarily key points. If the Western extremity of Lake Ontario was where the life of the Niagara Frontier began, it was at the Eastern extremity of Lake Erie that it developed and where up to the present it has reached its fullest expression. No doubt this was natural, since the Niagara Falls formed the greatest obstacle to further passage by water toward the West; and the principal stepping off place was therefore developed on the far side of that obstacle, at the Lake Erie end. At any rate, in spite of the initial advantages of Fort Niagara, its protected position and the deeper water of Lake Ontario, Youngstown remains *a village* with a fort—Buffalo is now *a city* of over 600,000 people.

Until about 1825, the settlement at the mouth of the Buffalo Creek could be described as a lakeshore village in which the tempo was—shall we say—deliberate? It was an interesting community, but it could hardly have been recognized as the progenitor of one of the great industrial centres of the world. Its handful of citizens, living and working under pioneer conditions, was concerned almost solely with the activities of a small transshipment and distributing business, in goods and merchandise. Hence, to them *the Erie Canal* was to be the stabilizer of water traffic and so a guarantee of prosperity. And while the Canal was approaching, this small rural centre was confronted with one of those controversies which to posterity seem quite unnecessary but which, in the early days of pioneer life, and especially in the embryonic state of transportation, managed to generate a great deal of heat. That question was: should the village of Buffalo *build a harbour* and thereby become the terminus of the Erie Canal, or should that privilege belong to the Village of Black Rock on the Niagara River, where natural formation provided a sufficient shelter for vessels of those days? The odds must have seemed about even. A harbour at Buffalo Creek could be expanded, but required a break-water and to dredge away a sand bar. On the other hand, to get in and out of the secure but limited wharves of Black Rock involved grappling with the swift current of the Niagara River.



The story of Buffalo's successful struggle for the harbour and thereby for ascendancy is important, because, as so often happens in frontier life, it turns on *one personality*, and it created a tradition.



The Federal Government had denied aid; the State of New York had offered a loan of \$12,000—under conditions! A small group of citizens in Buffalo had formed a company. They set out to build a harbour. But their first courageous steps were dogged by misfortune, act of God and act of man, and the Depression of 1819 almost gave the whole venture its *coup de grace*. In such a situation only one thing can turn defeat to victory, and that is a champion

—a man of spirit and determination. Such was *Samuel Wilkeson*. He pledged his own resources—but he contributed a great deal more than money, indeed the vital ingredients of success—invincible determination, undiscouraged enthusiasm, sterling integrity. Dr. Marvin Rapp tells us that:

“When the hired engineer failed to produce the desired results, Samuel Wilkeson took active charge of the construction in spite of the lack of previous experience in such an undertaking. Bad weather again and again swept away the piles and piers as soon as they were set in place; new construction problems constantly presented themselves in the solution of which new methods, techniques, and even machinery had to be invented; financial aid had to be secured from the villagers.”



And, always, Samuel Wilkeson was working against a dead-line, and the certainty that—“no harbour—no canal.”



Even when, in an effort to demonstrate to a skeptical Government and to scoffing Black Rock neighbours that the sand bar could be lowered, Wilkeson and his friends built the Steam Boat *Superior* in Buffalo Creek rather than in the excellent shipyard of Black Rock, he only just escaped disaster. Nature co-operated with Samuel, but only just; and, on the day when the *Superior* made her decisive trial-run, she stuck on the sand bar and was floated only after some of the City Fathers aboard had been removed—presumably the heavy-weights! Floating free, she proceeded up Lake Erie, with banners flying, symbolic of the Frontier spirit.



But the battle was not over. Black Rock, led by the redoubtable Porter Family, had in fact become the principal port at the Eastern end of the Lake. The Porter brothers, Peter and Augustus, justly enjoyed considerable political influence; and a loan for the development of Black Rock harbour was secured. Moreover, in accordance with the best Anglo-Saxon traditions, a newspaper war was launched. It was a real fight. Fortunately for Samuel Wilkeson, the water at Buffalo was a foot higher than at Black Rock, a factor

which materially affected the amount of excavation required for the Canal itself; moreover, the harbour at Buffalo Creek was capable of expansion, while that at Black Rock was restricted. And so the decision was made to end the Erie Canal at Buffalo Creek. Samuel Wilkeson and his devoted supporters had won the day!



The Village of Black Rock long since has been absorbed by the City of Buffalo. Today, the controversy seems academic. But that view is not entirely justified. We must not under-estimate these early struggles. Ice, fog, wind, are all serious problems for Buffalo Harbour, and all through the 19th Century to the present time it has been necessary to construct breakwaters, piers, and other harbour installations to safeguard shipping during the eight months of the year when navigation is open, and during the seasonal storms. The success that has been achieved is to be seen in the fact that Buffalo is now *the largest inland port* in the world. Do not let us belittle human effort involved in attaining this high position merely because we of today have such a mastery over the use of mechanical power. Our fathers had to do things the hard way. They knew that, in the end, it is the application of the human heart and mind to the inert mass presented by nature that leads to the creation of our Material Civilization. The Niagara Frontier is one of the great centres in the world where energy and enterprise have been able to harness power and create what Mankind is asking for, decade after decade. Samuel Wilkeson is symbolic of the heritage of the Niagara Frontier.



With the Erie Canal completed to Buffalo, a constant stream of men and goods began to flow steadily and indeed swiftly towards the West. And, in due time, Buffalo became one of the great immigrant ports of the world. The Niagara Frontier grew prosperous. No doubt even the richest of its citizens lived in a way that might seem hardship to a generation nurtured on steam heat, hot baths, and ice cream sodas. But prosperity, like adversity, is fortunately relative; and the people of the Niagara Frontier be-

came rich in a tradition of work and enterprise; above all, they built churches and schools. Later on, colleges, galleries, and a fine historical society followed. And, in this generation, a university and one of the most efficient museums for the exposition of science, in the nation.



The second half of the 19th Century brought its vicissitudes. By the early seventies, the newly-developed method of transportation—the *railroad*—had begun to threaten the economic position of the Erie Canal and hence of Buffalo. The railroad interests attempted at first to ignore Buffalo, the waterway capital. But in economic matters it is never safe to ignore anything. Buffalo would not be ignored.



It was not to be expected that the men who had grown up in the Niagara tradition would yield to the challenge. On the contrary, Buffalo, like *Oliver Twist*, *asked for more*. Speaking at St. Louis in 1863, George Hazard, President of the Board of Trade, declared that:

“Buffalo, as the half way house between the Mississippi and the Atlantic, holds out her hand to you. We want your flour, your corn, your wheat, and your provisions—your tobacco—we want your hemp, unless you think you can make better use of it at home; and I trust the time is not far distant when your far-famed iron mountain, now reposing like a coy maiden to be wooed on your plains, must come to our embrace. We come to you as commercial men, as merchants ‘seeking goodly pearls.’ We know that here is an empire far exceeding that for which the merchant princes of the Old World contended; and we desire to cultivate and establish reciprocal commercial relations, which shall remain and increase and cement the East and the West, in one great financial union of interest.”



These eloquent words describe the economic status of this frontier prior to the railroad era, but they also disclose a spirit of enterprise which was to turn danger to advantage. The Buffalo Board of Trade was active in sustaining canal traffic, and among the first results of its determination not to be “railroaded” was the aboli-

tion, in 1882, of all canal tolls. It was a courageous step, but could not be decisive. As Professor Rapp has pointed out, in attempting to offset the competition of the railroad carriers, Buffalo "was trying to resist a force that was inevitably to curtail the long-held prominence of the commercial interests associated with the Port of Buffalo." Canal tonnage had reached a peak in 1889, when six million bushels of wheat and flour had been transported from the West; a year later this figure had dropped to 2½ million bushels. The outcome was more than clear; it had arrived. To a community built upon *transit* trade the outlook was indeed bleak; history has many examples of the desolation wrought by a change in the flow of traffic, among which perhaps the classic is Venice. Was the Frontier to become no more than a tourist centre, a honeymoon capital? An American Venice?



With characteristic foresight and energy, the Frontier turned to what we might call the Frontier tradition—*self help*. They met the threat of the railroads with development of industry. Again, they succeeded and thus made of a dangerous rival a not unwilling handmaiden. Railroads dearly love a *freight customer*.



The turning point in Frontier thinking is well expressed in a penetrating question thus posed by the *Buffalo Directory* of 1862:

"So many shipbuilders to build, so many sailors to navigate, so many machinists to make engines, so many labourers to handle freight by rail or water, so many canallers, so many produce dealers, and beyond these as many professional and mercantile men and mechanics as were needed to take care of the souls, bodies, and stomachs of the others. These were all to be fed by a commerce changing with the seasons, one year rich in fruits, and another too small for the demand upon it. Should Buffalo go backward? Should it always be the sport of prosperous and unprosperous years, relying on the luck of the Irish famines, Crimean and Italian wars, and especially liable to be crushed by monetary panics?"



That question has not yet received its final answer, as many of my friends in Buffalo will have noted, but Buffalo dealt with the immediate answer in characteristic fashion. The railroads came to

the Frontier. They came to Buffalo so thoroughly as to pierce its very vitals, thus creating a serious problem for future city-planners. The Lackawanna Railroad destroyed many of the old buildings associated with Buffalo's early triumphs, including that of the Board of Trade; and the New York Central still snorts contemptuously along the historic terrace to Black Rock, where once the city fathers watched the busy life of the port. But the Frontier made the newcomers work for their living. There are today some 20,000 workers in the railroad industry in and around Buffalo. It is, in fact, one of the largest railroad centres in the United States and therefore in the world. If the railroads did not destroy the Niagara Frontier as the discovery of the sea route to India destroyed Venice, it was because they encountered an inherited spirit of enterprise, of undismayed perseverance against all obstacles, of work in foul weather as in fair. The railroads now serve where it was thought they would pass by on the other side.



While all the struggles and controversies over the waterways and railways were taking place in their most intensive form on the Niagara Frontier, as elsewhere in the United States, Science was quietly opening the book of the *Electric Age*. The telegraph and the telephone occupied early pages of that book; power, as we know it, was to come later. Until 1881, there had been little or no attention given to the possibility of using Niagara Falls as a means of capturing and transporting Electricity. Engineers were pre-occupied in solving baffling problems of *how to convey* electrical energy—scientists in the raging controversy of *direct* and *alternating* currents. How quickly we forget what utterly disheartening problems some of the commonplaces of today were to our fathers!



Of course, the possibility of harnessing the Falls in the mechanical sense had been in the minds of even the earliest pioneers. Chabert Joncaire, who some 200 years ago enjoyed the proud title of "Master of the Portage and Dictator of the French Government's Trade with the West," built a mill-race, six feet wide and four feet deep, and used the power to run a saw-mill at what now

is the foot of First Street, in Niagara Falls. A hundred years later, that powerful family, the Porters, struggled long to develop water-power in the old sense of the phrase. Their appeals to the capitalists of the day were unsuccessful; financiers could be as blind to opportunity in those days as they sometimes now are; and when Augustus Porter died, in 1850, Niagara was not yet harnessed in any sense at all. But again, it was not to be expected that the tradition of the Frontier would acknowledge defeat. They knew how to persevere and to overcome—these frontier folk. The fight for electric power and its later stupendous development is a story full of interest, but far beyond my capacity.

The dramatic moment came when, at a foreclosure sale by the Sheriff of Niagara County, Jacob Schoelkopf bought the whole venture, including "the ditch," for \$71,000; and so laid the foundation for one of those enlightened economic dynasties to which the system of Private Enterprise owes so much. The Capitalist system owes a large debt to such men. Young Jacob had come to Buffalo in 1844 from Germany—with not much more than that German shrewdness, integrity, and capacity for hard work which we know so well and respect so highly. Today, the Schoelkopf interests produce on this Frontier more than 1,300,000 horsepower.



The capture, development, and use of electrical energy, for industry and in a thousand ways to promote the betterment of life, is reflected in a great volume and diversity of *industry* along the Frontier, *today*. In the development of energy from the Falls and of all the industries that follow it, such as the electro-chemical industries, we see another example not of an effortless slave civilization, but of undismayed struggle against difficulties; we read a story of second, third, and repeated effort to overcome temporary defeat. Once again, the frontier tradition is translated into facts.



Meanwhile, the Canadian side of the Niagara Frontier, in comparison with the American, developed slowly. Among the early reasons for this is the fact that Niagara-on-the-Lake ceased to be

the provincial capital after 1796, when Fort Niagara was handed over to the United States. And so Newark, to give it its first name, became a small *country town*. But if it lost the opportunity to be a Toronto, it happily preserved its heritage of rural beauty and preserved its own way of life. Its memories are not unworthy. After all, it is something to have been the place where first, in Upper Canada, a Constitution and Parliament were established—a parliament of wise and practical men, who enacted the fundamental laws of British freedom—the Common Law—trial by jury, and the repudiation of slavery. It was here that William Lyon MacKenzie, grandfather of the present Prime Minister of Canada, began a somewhat unorthodox, if not turbulent career as a Canadian Patriot. Here too, were established the first public library, the first agricultural society, the first Evangelical mission. But the centre of economic gravity shifted to York, *now Toronto*, when the latter became the Provincial Capital. If they have developed their material inheritance more slowly than their American neighbours on this side of the River, it may well prove to be an advantage in the end. There is some value in the old Scottish motto—"mak siccar," meaning "make sure."



The Canadians, like their American neighbours, share in the heritage, material and spiritual, of the Niagara River; and share its frontier traditions. To them, the picture of the past bears a rather different aspect; and perhaps one that would be surprising to many Americans. But they have also a true perspective and see the past century-and-a-half as a whole, recognising the elements that *last* and the elements that *pass away*.



The heritage of the Niagara Frontier is *threefold*. It is a heritage of character. It is a heritage of physical power. It is a heritage of international common-sense. We see the first in the will to dare the unknown; the will to prevail against great odds. It is symbolized by Samuel Wilkeson, by the Porters, by the Schoelkopfs. The second is embodied in the Niagara River and its stupendous Falls.

The third is displayed to the whole world not only in the letter of Treaties but in a border fortified and defended with one, and only one, weapon—*goodwill*—ancient but, let us thank God, not yet outmoded.



This great inheritance has not been buried—it has been invested and soundly invested. The dividends continue. The future will bring its problems, but it will bring also its Wilkesons, its Porters, its Evanses, and its Schoelkopfs. May we not hope that to these men of the future will fall the mastery of working conditions which will open a new era in the social aspect of industry?



Meantime, the people of the Niagara Frontier truly may say: “The lot is fallen unto me in a fair ground; yes, I have a goodly heritage.”

THE END



“Actorum Memores simul affectamus Agenda!”



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

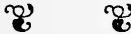


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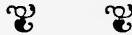
THIS NEWCOMEN ADDRESS, *dealing with the place in American History of that colorful region known as the NIAGARA FRONTIER, was delivered at a National Newcomen Dinner of The Newcomen Society of England, held in Ballroom of The Pierre, at New York, N.Y., U.S.A., on January 8, 1948. SIR ANGUS, the guest of honor, was introduced by THE VERY REV. EDWARD RANDOLPH WELLES, D.D., Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, Buffalo, New York; Chairman of the Niagara Committee, in American Newcomen. The dinner was presided over by the SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT FOR NORTH AMERICA, in this international honorary Society whose headquarters are at London.*





“Fort Niagara was held all through the American Revolution and had been retained by Great Britain pending fulfillment by the newly-created United States of America of the Treaty of 1783, under which independence was recognized. It was given up to the United States in 1796, the date having been fixed under the Treaty negotiated by John Jay.”

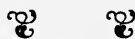
—SIR ANGUS FLETCHER





“The great inheritance of the Niagara Frontier has not been buried—it has been invested and soundly invested. The dividends continue. The future will bring its problems, but *it will bring also* its Wilkesons, its Porters, its Evanses, and its Schoelkopfs. May we not hope that to these men of the future will fall the mastery of working conditions which will open a new era in the social aspect of industry?”

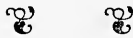
—SIR ANGUS FLETCHER





“The people of the Niagara Frontier truly may say: My lot is fallen upon a good ground; yea, I have surely a goodly heritage!”

—SIR ANGUS FLETCHER





THE NEWCOMEN SOCIETY OF ENGLAND
IN NORTH AMERICA

BROADLY, *this British Society has as its purposes: to increase an appreciation of American-British traditions and ideals in the Arts and Sciences, especially in that bond of sympathy for the cultural and spiritual forces which are common to the two countries; and, secondly, to serve as another link in the intimately friendly relations existing between Great Britain and the United States of America.*

The Newcomen Society centers its work in the history of Material Civilization, the history of: Industry, Invention, Engineering, Transportation, the Utilities, Communication, Mining, Agriculture, Finance, Banking, Economics, Education, and the Law—these and correlated historical fields. In short, the background of those factors which have contributed or are contributing to the progress of Mankind.

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*"The roads you travel so briskly
lead out of dim antiquity,
and you study the past chiefly because
of its bearing on the living present
and its promise for the future."*

—LIEUTENANT GENERAL JAMES G. HARBORD,
K.C.M.G., D.S.M., LL.D., U.S. ARMY (RET.)
(1866-1947)

*Late American Member of Council at London
The Newcomen Society of England*





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